Molluscum Contagiosum

What is molluscum?

Molluscum contagiosum is a common viral infection in children. It causes bumps on the skin including the eyelids and eyelid margins (ocular molluscum). The bumps are usually pearl-like and dome-shaped with a central crater (umbilication) [See figures 1].

Fig. 1: Typical lesions of molluscum contagiosum.

How is ocular molluscum diagnosed?

The appearance of the bumps is characteristic; thus, the diagnosis is usually clinical, or made based on the appearance. If or when a surgical excision is done, a pathologist can confirm the diagnosis from a tissue sample.

What other diseases does ocular molluscum resemble?

Molluscum can look similar to but usually be distinguished from warts (verruca vulgaris), chicken pox (varicella), and papilloma (usually in the middle-aged and the elderly) by its characteristic appearance.

Is molluscum contagious?
Yes. Molluscum can spread by direct contact.

**Who gets ocular molluscum?**

Molluscum contagiosum is a viral infection that occurs most commonly in children and in patients whose immune system is weakened (immune-compromised).

**Is molluscum dangerous?**

No. Molluscum is a benign disorder. If the lid margin is affected, children may develop red, irritated eyes.

**How is molluscum treated?**

Molluscum lesions will go away over time but can take several months to sometimes a few years to resolve. In children, the most common and effective treatments include surgical removal, incision and curettage, or cryotherapy. In children, these treatments often require general anesthesia. These treatments can eliminate molluscum lesions, but they also can recur.

**When is treatment of ocular molluscum indicated?**

Treatment is not mandatory but is appropriate to reduce transmission to others, the spread of the lesions from one part of the body to another (autoinoculation) and scarring from frequent scratching.

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